



What's been happening?

In February we commemorated Groundhog Day, celebrated Chinese New Year, exchanged valentines, celebrated 100 days in school and observed President's Day. The many events kept us very busy, providing the children with plenty of learning opportunities. Groundhog Day invites to learn about hibernation and shadows. Chinese New Year is an excellent opportunity to learn about different cultures. Valentine's Day led us to learn about letter writing, the mailing process, and friendship. The 100 days of school was great for applying all the knowledge acquired in math and extending it, as well as acknowledge how long we've all been together. Finally, President's Day was a fine time to learn about the history of the United States.



Language Arts



February was a very busy month! With all of the snow days, we had a lot of catching up to do! The kindergarten groups continued reviewing beginning blends while also learning about ending blends. We also discussed punctuation. The children learned about periods, exclamation points and question marks and when to use them. We especially focused on questions and common words found at the beginning of questions. Now, also, the children can recognize when a character is talking in a story. Towards the end of the month we began learning about long vowels and started with the silent e. We will continue to work on long vowels through the month of March and apply them in our reading and writing.

We have also been putting a lot of emphasis on our sight words, practicing them with various games. We have played unscrambling games, relay races and various other fun learning games developed by Ms. Kristin to learn, review and retain our sight words.

The Pre-Ks continue to practice their letter sounds, especially to help our new friends that joined us in January. We have focused on the hardworking vowels this month. We continue to review and apply letter sounds with Zoophonics, drawing, differentiating words with those sounds and using the mystery box.



ART



Art (continued)

They tasted delicious! The children also made a banner which is hanging up over the library, and a necklace made with 100 fruitloops.

Using paint of various colors the children have also had two opportunities to do some free painting. A piece of each child's work is displayed over the window facing the parking lot. The paintings are bright, colorful, and of course unique. The children also enjoyed playing with playdough, and using scissors throughout the month.

Much of this month's focus was on Valentine's Day. The children all helped contribute to the large Valentine's bulletin board by painting letters (to spell out "All You Need is Love"), painting heart-shaped musical notes for pretend sheet music, and painting buggies and a stop sign (which read "Stop in the name of love!"). The children also added Valentine-themed words to the heart-shaped musical notes. They even made the border of the board themselves – painting strips of paper and sponge-painting hearts in alternating sizes, creating a pattern. The paint, of course, was in various shades of pink and red. It was very festive and added a sweet touch to the feel of the room this month. Each child also created their own Valentine's Day mailbox to store and take home all of those lovely goodies!

For Groundhog Day, the children learned that if the groundhog sees his shadow there will be six more weeks of winter, but if he doesn't, spring is on the way. They enjoyed creating their own shadow puppets and putting on a "Punxsutawney Phil" puppet show with Ms. Diane.

Each group created something different for Chinese New Year: The Jellyfish made fireworks with glitter glue, the Tiger Sharks made dragons out of egg cartons, and the Speedy Dolphins made their own shadow figure of a firecracker, a rabbit or a dragon using cardboard paper. They also learned how to write "Good Luck" and "Good Fortune" in Chinese!!

Besides learning about Groundhog Day, Chinese New Year, and the 100th day of school, the children also learned about a Brazilian artist named Helio Oiticica, who brought the visual arts, dance and music together. They viewed several of his works of art and watched a video about him. Then they created their own abstract painting with paint and superimposed shapes using strings.

On the 100th day of school the children made sugar cookies from scratch. They followed the recipe written on the board, measured, mixed and used cookie cutters and sprinkles to decorate the cookies.



Handwriting

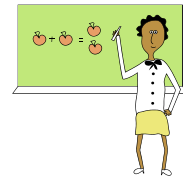


Luckily, none of the snow days we had fell on our handwriting day, Thursday, so we never had to do a make-up handwriting lesson!

This month the children have continued learning lowercase letters. This month's letters were u, i, e, l, k, y, j, p, r and n. Letters p, r and n are part of a group of letters called "dancer letters," in which the children get to use their bodies to mimic the motions of their hand while writing these letters. It has been fun pretending to get away from the cold and the snow by diving into the "pool!"

The kindergartners continue to work weekly in their handwriting workbooks, reviewing uppercase letters. As a supplement and challenge for all of the children, once paperwork has been completed, they now have the opportunity to practice writing short words in all lowercase letters. So far they have practiced writing jet, yet, cook, cats, dogs, log, like, love, dug and wag on the lined slates. This activity is a preview of handwriting class at the end of March, in which the children will finally begin to practice their writing skills on lined paper. The lined slates are oversized in comparison to the paper and are useful in learning to size letters and fitting them accurately above, below and between the lines. The paper will certainly be a challenge!

Math



In the beginning of the month, the children finished learning and reviewing fractions. Fractions have certainly aided the children in the second half (get it? ☺) of February's lessons: numbers! The children learned to read and write the numbers 11-30 with the aid of the book, *Let's Count it Out, Jesse Bear*, as well as to represent these numbers using Unifix cubes. These number lessons have become a precursor to "skip counting", which the children will learn in March. The teacher places two groups of 10 Unifix cubes on the table and asks children to split them in half (thanks, fraction lessons!), or in groups of five. Next we count the cubes by fives and any remaining ones. The children have been challenged to count cubes offered by the teacher and also to produce a number requested by the teacher. The kindergartners have been able to practice these skills in their workbooks, too.

Since our 100TH day of school fell on Thursday, February 17, we rearranged our schedule a bit so that we could have math class that day! Most of the children remembered to bring in their bag of 100 objects, and luckily, our friend Matthew G. brought in an extra bag *just* in case (thanks, Matthew!), and the teachers had some Goldfish crackers available for counting, too! Two children "forgot" the job they had to do in the middle of counting and ate some of their objects - oops! ☹ The children divided their 100 objects into groups of 10, then rechecked their counting to make sure each group had 10. We practiced counting by 10s (a skill we started practicing during calendar time and will focus on during March) to make sure we had 10 groups of 10. We learned that 10 groups of 10 really means 100! Wow!

Thank you to the parents for helping their child with the task of counting 100 objects! We hope you had fun doing it! Most of the class's 100 objects are on display in the classroom - items such as cereal, illustrations of sea creatures, Goldfish crackers, M&Ms, cat food, Pokémon cards, popcorn, puzzle pieces, stickers and more!

We extend a warm welcome to our new classmate, Christian!



Drama



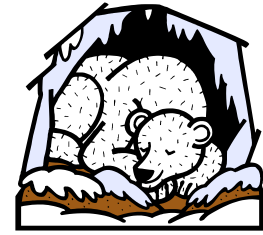
Taking advantage of Groundhog Day, we learned what a shadow puppet theatre is and how it is made. With the paper groundhog puppets they made in art class, the children put on their own show. We covered a table with a cloth, placed a light in back and a clear paper screen in the front. By turns, the children went under the table and told their own stories by making shadows.

The children also learned the process of mailing a letter and then dramatized it. They wrote their letters and addressed their envelopes. Then they took turns being postal worker and mail carrier. The other children went to the post office to buy a stamp, placed the letter in the mailbox, the mail carrier put the letters in the bag and delivered them.

Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like and *The Most Beautiful Thing in the World* are two beautiful Chinese stories that the children dramatized. They chose parts, donned costumes and put on a show. They enjoyed doing it so much that they asked to do it several times, taking the various parts.

Next month we will be learning about Mardi Gras and dramatizing the celebration, as well as dramatizing an Irish story, among other things.

Science



Our science theme of the month is animals! We finished up our unit "Animals in Winter." In addition to learning about animals that hibernate, the children learned about migration and adaptation. We applied adaptation to many situations, not just winter. We finished off the unit with a game of "Adaptation" created by Ms. Kristin. The children would be told a situation and an animal and have to behave as that animal would. For example, a deer in winter grows extra fur to keep warm, so when told to be deer in winter the children would scramble to get their coats on. We learned that puffer fish puff up in the face of danger, so when told to be puffer fish in danger the children made themselves look larger using their arms and standing on tiptoe. We had a lot of fun!

Towards the end of February we began our new unit of "Animal Habitats." So far the children have been introduced to the concept of a habitat. They even drew pictures of their own habitats which are hanging at the front of the room. The habitats that they will learn about are the arctic, ocean, freshwater, forests, rainforests and desert. Brainpop has wonderful videos to help us learn about and understand these environments as well as fun activities. The children will also partake in experiments to help them visualize and comprehend what it would be like to live in these environments.